

## BATTLING WITH THE SPURS.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON COCK FIGHTING AT OLD SAN ANTONIO.

Crowds with Silver Bottles Gather at the Pit in the Poor Mexican Quarter—Fever Club of the Feathered Gladiators.

There are very few cities in the United States where cock fighting is permitted by law and usually carried on as a recognized amusement. San Antonio, Tex., is one of these few, and every Sunday afternoon the battle royal is fought in the cocking marts in the Mexican quarter. Its prominence is perhaps due to the numerous Mexican residents, for barring a bull fight a Mexican would rather see a cock fight than any other exhibition.

The pits are generally located in the poorest Mexican quarter of the city, in a yard reached by a passage through a one-story, flat-roofed adobe building, in which is a saloon. Chickens are everywhere in the room, in the hall out in the yard, and even on the low roof. When not



IN THE COCKPIT.

under their owners' arms, they are in coops, and they keep up a continual crowing that is deafening.

For several hours before the pitting commences the saloon is crowded. Beer and whisky are consumed in large quantities, and discussion of the merits of the various birds at times rises to the pitch of battle, but subsides before blood is spilled. When the time arrives for the exhibition to commence a general movement toward the yard takes place through the back door into the yard.

The yard itself consists of a goal suspended by beams. The pit is about twenty feet square, and is surrounded by a solid board fence about two feet high. From this low railing the seats rise in tiers, back and up to the outside edge of the roof. The seats consist merely of narrow boards on slim supports arranged like circus benches. The arena seats



HIS CHICKEN WAS "NO BUENO."

about 300 people, and is soon crowded to an uncomfortable degree with a sweltering and noisy crowd. Jesus Gómez, the humble tamale-peddler, points against the travelling man from Chicago who is out in all the glory of his suit, "Sundaying" in San Antonio. The dead tough sport, the smooth gambler, and the uniformed policeman, they are all there, sharing a common interest that makes them all kin.

Every man turns his silver dollars over in his pocket, wondering whether, in response to the earnest solicitations of the owner of the black-breasted red, he will bet against him and on the Georgia blue, or cover the dollar offered temptingly by the owner of the Georgia blue. As soon as the manager of the pit thinks that all the money is up that will be produced, orders are given to make ready for the first round.

The spectators go out to the coop, get their birds, and put the odds on them. These odds are steel spurcs, generally about 2 inches



A WINNER.

long, sharp as a needle, and bound to the birds' heads. The birds are then brought in, and each is given a sharp blow at each other until angry. Their crooked combs afford no hold for the beak of their opponent, and the comb and its owner is the victor. The birds are set down on the ground and turned loose. They fly at each other; one drives his gaff into the other's comb, and the bird is withdrawn, and are started off in another shuffle. The man whose bird gets the gaff comes into him has the privilege of a free bird, and the other bird is given to the other bird was allowed to do it if he would twist the comb so as to kill the cock. The game goes on for a long time, and the spectators after driving them in and let them hang together until pulled apart. This combing continues until one bird is killed or until the combing of the game took nearly done, but fights to the death.

In the intervals between the combings the



DOWN.

Mexicans, young and old, come out from the audience, each with a chicken under his arm, and squatting down in the pit, talk about the great birdfights of the past, and tell of the combings fought in the past, and tell of the wisdom their particular bird could perform if the conditions were just right. But the man is indeed poverty stricken who comes out on a Sunday afternoon with a chick under his arm.

they are very hard up for money that will still buy a hen, and a hen of 20 years ago, but the majority offered for sale at these prices are chickens that have turned tail and run in some previous battle, and are well bred and well marked and would bring at least \$5 apiece anywhere in the North that combinghouses are a popular pastime. The cockerel, however, is a yellow, spiced rice, black or yellow legged gribes, and blacks seem to be the commonest varieties.

There are several battles between birds owned in two different towns near the city, or else between the city and the country birds. The interest is kept at fever pitch by an occasional battle with slasher game or spurs.



SPUR IN POSITION.

They are shaped like a knife blade, instead of a needle. Every stroke received from one of these wicked-looking knives cuts a swath of flesh from the opponent's body, and the cut is generally made by one bird getting its throat cut by the other.

Thus comes the battle royal for a grand sum of money, the birds being armed with such feathers as are provided for each one by its owner. The fighters form a ring, each holding his bird tail to the center, and the birds are set loose as if in a race. The birds hesitate a moment, then as rapidly as each picks an opponent and in a few seconds the first battle is being fought at once in the air. The birds are then set loose, and the looks for another to tackle, and the bloody work wages fast and furiously. In the course of the battle the birds become exhausted, and the war of each other fight it slowly out to the finish, when the last bird gives a feeble but strong effort, and then falls to the ground. Sometimes a silly chicken will set another bird all the birds in the pit will be round him and peck him, and strip the feathers in the wing, the tail, and the comb.

This cruel sport at the best, and many a sightless has left after the first shuffle, having had his eyes cut out, but we have heard that some have known to it the cock pit seems to possess a strong fascination, and they will undergo almost any sacrifice to get in with their game chick or with their dollars to be set on some other man's bird.

## NOVEL ENTERTAINMENT FOR LENT.

Young Mr. Helmsap and Miss "Montezuma" Brought from Paris.

"The talk about Lent being welcomed by fashionable society as a period for rest, after the exhaustions of the season's festivities, is just a wee little bit funny if you happen to know what Lent really means in the way of amusements to those in fashionable society who are supposed to be observing Lent more or less concealed and dusty by reason of sackcloth and ashes."

The lady who made this remark happens to know "what Lent really means in the way of amusements" for many people in politicsociety, for she makes an excellent income by her services in suggesting, arranging, and managing those amusements. Besides that, she was born in the set which now avails itself of her taste, tact and knowledge of such matters. Her remark was drawn forth by the writer congratulating her upon her own season of rest, which she opposed the world over while she was in Lent in Leavenworth.

Mr. Helmsap, right, with his wife, demands on no time, she added, for society has an ornate dress cannot afford to run any risks by allowing American artists to make their debut in America.

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## GRAND OPERA IN AMERICA.

WE DO WE IMPORT SINGERS OF ALL PARTS FROM EUROPE?

It's Music to the Musicians; Audience

Received a Foreign Label to the French

Opera, and Trained Chorus are French

Only Ahead—Capitulation of Americans

To Music and Concert Singing